

Clinton, Schumer, Lautenberg, Menendez, Nadler, Maloney, Fossella Call on President to Show Commitment to Victims of 9/11 Attacks by Funding Critical Health Programs

Tuesday, 22 January 2008

Washington, DC – Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton, Charles Schumer, Frank Lautenberg, and Robert Menendez, along with Representatives Jerrold Nadler, Carolyn Maloney, and Vito Fossella today called on President Bush to provide adequate funding for the health programs for the victims of the 9/11 attacks when he releases his budget request on February 4th. According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the estimated need for the health programs in the Fiscal Year 2008 was over \$200 million, of which the President only authorized a meager \$25 million. In a letter, the lawmakers pressed the President, who came to New York and stood with many of the first responders immediately after the attacks, to show his commitment to them now by making the funding of these vital health programs a priority in his Fiscal Year 2009 budget request.

“Shortly after the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001, President Bush came to New York to stand with the brave responders and recovery workers and pledged to stand by them. More than six years later they are suffering from illnesses as a direct result of their exposure to the toxic substances released at Ground Zero, and the funding for the vital health programs they rely on is now in the President’s hands” said Senator Clinton. “I am proud to have stood with them for six years as the lasting health effects of the terrorist attacks became clearer and clearer. I strongly urge the President to make good on his promise by providing the funding that is required so that the responders, victims, workers and residents who suffered through the attacks and their aftermath can get the care and services they deserve.

“For far to long, this Administration has denied the brave 9-11 first responders the health care they need and deserve. It is high time to end the absurd, herky-jerky funding process that has left thousands of needy 9-11 victims in the lurch from year to year. The President needs to step up to the plate and propose a budget that finally provides the testing and care our 9-11 heroes have been promised,” Schumer said.

“First responders, emergency workers and volunteers showed true courage during the recovery effort after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Now, many of these brave men and women are suffering serious illnesses from the toxins at Ground Zero. It’s time to give these heroes the treatment they deserve,” said Senator Lautenberg.

"With the health effects from 9/11, we are looking at a crisis that medical professionals have said could last decades, not just months or years," said Sen. Menendez. "In this Congress, we've had some important successes on health funding for those who were exposed to the toxins, but there needs to be a continuing commitment. The president should reflect this commitment in his budget proposal."

"The Bush Administration has a moral obligation to provide for those, as President Lincoln said who, ' have borne the battle,'" said Rep. Nadler. "I urge this President to meet that obligation. The federal government must dedicate all the funds necessary to provide for the medical monitoring and treatment of first responders and area residents, workers and students."

“In his last budget proposal, let’s hope the President finally gets it right and provides our brave 9/11 responders with the federal financial support they deserve,” Rep. Maloney said. “The Administration has failed to step up to the plate and demonstrate its commitment to the heroes of 9/11 in every single one of its previous budget proposals. It’s not too late to finally do right by those who risked life and limb to help their fellow citizens in the aftermath of 9/11, and are now suffering from serious – sometimes fatal – illnesses as a result of their heroism.”

Fossella said, "We have made progress over the last year to begin getting the resources necessary to help our 9/11 heroes and area residents and workers. However, we now need a significant investment by the federal government into health monitoring and treatment for those who are sick or injured. In addition, the federal government must develop a comprehensive plan to address the health impacts of 9/11. We continue urging the White House to provide adequate funding in the 2009 budget to help all those who are sick or injured as a result of the terror attacks."

A Copy of the Letter to President Bush is Attached -

January 23, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush

The White House

Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

When the World Trade Center collapsed on September 11, 2001, first responders, building and construction trades workers and volunteers came from all around the country to aid in the enormous rescue and recovery efforts. Other workers and residents in the area were also exposed to a poisonous mixture of asbestos, dioxin, jet fuel, and other toxins. Many of them are now suffering from serious, and sometimes fatal, illnesses as a result of their heroism. You stood with many of the first responders at the site of the World Trade Center and thanked them for their efforts. You noted that "we have seen our national character in eloquent acts of sacrifice";

The 9/11 health programs have continued to monitor and to treat many of the workers and residents exposed to the toxins at Ground Zero and Fresh Kills. It is imperative that adequate funding is provided to these programs administered by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) within the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In fiscal year 2008, the estimated need for 9/11 health programs as proposed by NIOSH was over \$200 million and yet you only requested a meager \$25 million for these programs. On February 4th when you release your budget request outlining your fiscal priorities for fiscal year 2009, you have an opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to 9/11 health programs and the first responders you stood with at Ground Zero, many of whom now suffer debilitating illnesses.

Those who responded heroically without regard to their own health to one of this country's greatest tragedies deserve our unwavering gratitude and support. We have a moral obligation to take care of their 9/11 health related illnesses. It is our national responsibility to care for those who did our country proud in the hours, days, weeks and months following the horrific attacks. We urge you to include the funding that is needed for 9/11 health programs in your budget and stand with these responders, workers and residents in their time of need.

Sincerely,

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